

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION: TROUBLE IN SEPTEMBER?

REF: 1439 MONTREAL 1977

1. IN APPARENT VICTORY OF PRAGMATISM OVER PRINCIPLE, PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARD OF GREATER MONTREAL VOTED JULY 31 TO ENROLL SOME 1600 "ILLEGALS" IN FRENCH SECTOR THEIR SCHOOLS THIS YEAR RATHER THAN PERMITTING PARENTAL CHOICE AS IN 1977. DECISION FOLLOWS ON LOSS OF COURT SUIT AGAINST GOVERNMENT FOR WITHHOLDING THREE MILLION DOLLARS OF NORMAL GRANTS IN DISPUTE ABOUT HOW MANY STUDENT WERE ILLEGAL AND HOW MANY ENTITLED TO GRANTS.

2. PSBGM CHAIRMAN BEMOANED NEED PUT FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE OBVIOUS PREFERENCE OF BOARD, PARENTS AND TEACHERS BUT EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT FUTURE OF SYSTEM IF THIS ACCOMMODATION NOT MADE. DECISION HAILED, OF COURSE, BY GOQ SPOKESMEN SUCH AS MIN. EDUCATION (AND ACTING PREMIER) JACQUES-YVAN MORIN AND CAMILLE LAURIN, LANGUAGE ACT GODFATHER, WHILE CASTIGATED AS SELL-OUT BY HEAD OF PROTESTANT TEACHER'S UNION, DON PEACOCK, AND BY BOARD MEMBER WINIFRED POTTER (WHO WILL OPPOSE TRUDEAU WHENEVER FEDERAL ELECTION HELD) WHO MUTTERED BITTERLY ABOUT "EVERYONE HAS APRICE AND OURS IS A MERE THREE MILLION."

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3. ROBERT DOBIE, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS (PACT), WHICH REPRESENTS SOME 5,400 TEACHERS IN THE SEVERAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMISSIONS ACROSS THE ISLAND OF MONTREAL, SAID HE WAS "SHOCKED AND DISAPPOINTED AT THE PSBGM DECISION". THE CATHOLIC SYSTEMS HAVE TAKEN IN ABOUT 1,600 INELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND NOW ANTICIPATE ANOTHER INFLUX FROM AMONG THOSE

STUDENT WHO WILL BE TURNED OUT BY THE PROTESTANT BOARD. DOBIE CLAIMS THEY CAN HOLD THE LINE BECAUSE, UNLIKE THE PSBGM, THEY NEVER SOUGHT PROVINCIAL GRANTS FOR THEIR ILLEGALLY ENROLLED STUDENTS. THERE HAS, INSTEAD, EVOLVED A CLOSELY KNIT COMMUNITY EFFORT INVOLVING PARENTS, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS, WHO HAVE AGREED TO LARGER CLASSES, TO ALLOW THE NEWCOMERS TO BE ABSORBED INTO THE EXISTING SYSTEM. COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS, SUCH AS THE CONSIGLIO EDUCATIVO ITALO-CANADESE, HAVE LENT POWERFUL SUPPORT TO THE MOVEMENT. THOUGH "LEFT HOLDING THE BALL", DOBIE INDICATED NO CHANGES INPACT PLANS FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR.

4. COMMENT: REAL ISSUE NOT QUESTION OF WISDOM (OR MORALITY AS SOME SEE IT) OF DECISION BUT EFFECT ON SOCIAL PEACE WHEN SCHOOLS REOPEN. GOQ VERY SMUG LAST YEAR ABOUT FACT THAT MUCH-FEARED DISSENTION DID NOT TAKE PLACE, IGNORING FACT WIDESPREAD NON-COMPLIANCE WITH LAW PRECLUDED NEED FOR DISSENT. WHAT WILL HAPPEN THIS YEAR IF ANGRY PARENTS REFUSE PUT CHILDREN IN FRENCH SECTION AND "SIT-IN" IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS AS IN 1974, OR TURN UGLY, IS ANYBODY'S GUESS. IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY PSBGM WILL FORCE THEM OUT, BUT NOW THAT BOARD OFFICIALLY ON SIDE OF GOVERNMENT, GOQ MAY FEEL CONSTRAINED TAKE ACTION. IF COULD PROVE TO BE "THE FALL THAT

WAS."
HARPER

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